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INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3791  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS GUANGZHOU 000310

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

BANGKOK FOR REO, CDC, AND USAID  
HHS FOR OGHA - STEIGER, ELVANDER, BHAT  
CDC ATLANTA FOR CCID AND COGH  
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Avian Influenza: Guangdong Officials Quick to  
Criticize UC-Irvine Claim that Guangdong is the Source

Ref: A) 07 Beijing 1387

B) 06 Beijing 23469

(U) This message is Sensitive But Unclassified. Please  
protect accordingly.

11. (SBU) Guangdong Province officials denied the University of California- Irvine (UCI) report released on March 5 that the original and some subsequent strains of the H5N1 virus originated in Guangdong. The rapidity of the denial suggests the sensitivity of the issue, especially for a province where economic well-being, foreign investment, tourism, trade and trade fairs can potentially be compromised by a failure to control pandemic disease. This denial is consistent with others: in Guangdong following the publication of similar conclusions in a U.S.-China scientific study in February 2006 and in Fujian in late October 2006 with regard to the prevalence of a "Fujian-like" strain of the virus. While this latest denial is frustrating to researchers and highlights the lack of transparency and openness even after post-SARS promises to share information, valuable opportunities still exist for coordination and cooperation with South China public health officials and organizations.

12. (SBU) We urge researchers to continue inviting Chinese universities, labs, and public health departments to collaborate on or contribute to future studies of this kind. This will help engender a more cooperative atmosphere, though is unlikely to eliminate the knee-jerk impulse of Chinese officials to deny anything that sheds an unflattering light on China.

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